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ABSTRACT

Adapted from Idaho's original Parents in Reading program, the materials in this booklet are designed for use by school administrators who want to begin a positive program that involves parents in reading. Various sections contain samples of board policy statements, press releases, and radio commercials; samples of letters to parents new to the district and to parents of new-born children; suggestions for involving public libraries; and instructions for teachers. The booklet also provides reproducible materials for use by parents and sample monthly activity sheets for administrators to send to parents suggesting reading activities. (FL)

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ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE

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Foreword

The 8th Annual Gallup Poll of the public's attitude toward the public schools revealed a startling fact: two out of every three parents list lack of parental attention, concern and supervision of the child as major reasons behind declining test scores. The same poll also revealed that parents say they want to be involved in their children's education, but need direction from the schools.

This program gives parents that direction. These materials are adapted from Idaho's original Parents in Reading program, which proved highly successful and involved thousands of parents. In addition, the program was written up in the New York Times in an article by Nancy Lorrick; and in Family Weekly--read by over forty million people. The direction in this program is very simple--"Read to your children fifteen minutes a day, five days a week." Parents get two days off--what more could they ask?

If you are a board member, superintendent or principal and you have small children, plan to participate in this program and make your own personal commitment. Read to your own children fifteen minutes a day, five days a week, for nine weeks. I did, and I discovered the warmth and closeness that come from reading sessions between parents and children.

Research shows that parents have a greater influence on the child's life than anyone else. Parents are the first teachers. Through this program you ask parents to help--most will respond positively.

You are reminding the parents in your district that reading is basic to success in school. It is the foundation of all learning.

It's a positive program for you and the parents in your district.

Roy Truby
Idaho State Superintendent
of Public Instruction (1974-78)

Introduction to Materials

The materials in this program are designed for school administrators who want to begin a positive program which involves parents in reading. Since reading is fundamental to all other disciplines, it has the potential to increase and enhance achievement in all areas.

The program contains a parents' booklet which should be a gift from you to the parents in your district. The booklet is also available in a Spanish-English version. You may want to send it to the parents of all K-3 or even K-6 children in your district, and to new parents moving into the district. The superintendent might also send a personal letter welcoming them to the school district.

The booklet also makes a nice gift to the parents of new-born children, along with a letter of congratulations. This kind of personal touch has too long been missing in public education.

Other materials are also available to help launch the program. Samples are enclosed in this booklet, with the exception of the Parents Booklets and bumper stickers which may be ordered from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Included are sample board policy, news release and sample radio commercials which could be rewritten to your own specifications. In Idaho, television commercials were produced using the nostalgic theme. State or local school district administrators adopting this program may want to develop their own commercials, using locally known personalities to encourage parents to read to their children for fifteen minutes a day.

The materials contain suggestions for involving public libraries, because their cooperation is an essential ingredient for this program. Also, all parents should have access to public school libraries.

Suggestions for involving teachers are also included in this packet. An essential ingredient in this program is a nine week contest in which parents are asked to sign a form each week to certify that he or she, or both, read to their child for at least fifteen minutes, five days a week. Certificates are awarded to parents or other participating adults who successfully complete the program. The superintendent, board chairman or school principal may want to personally hand the awards to the parents at a parents' appreciation assembly.

Finally, the program contains some sample activity sheets which should be sent home to parents once a month. A monthly activity sheet is important as a reminder so the program will not lose its momentum. It could be a monthly suggestion, or the superintendent or principal may want to write a monthly letter to parents. It could be called "Parents' Corner."

Program Components

I. SAMPLE BOARD POLICY

The first step in adopting this program is the commitment of the Board of Trustees. Board members are often parents too, and will most likely respond to a positive program which involves parents. The board should formally adopt a policy in support of this program. An example of such a policy follows:

> The Happy Valley School Board endorses the Parents in Reading program. We are asking all parents in our school district to read to or with each child 15 minutes each day, five days a week. Our theme in this program will be "Build Some Memories with Your Children."
>
> We especially encourage parents of preschool children and those who have children in elementary schools to participate.

II. PRESS RELEASE

If the school district has a public relations officer, he or she should be involved from the beginning because this program is dependent upon successful communications. A sample press release is included as a possible means of informing the community about the program. The press release could be a joint release with the local P.T.A. citizens advisory committee or a local chapter of the International Reading Association. Participation by such groups is essential to the success of this program. A sample press release follows:

> The Happy Valley School District announces the beginning of a new campaign for this school year. We are asking parents to read to or with each child 15 minutes each day, five days a week. Supt. John Doe said the theme in the campaign is "Build Some Memories With Your Children." It's a nostalgic theme, as many parents in the Happy Valley School District will remember the warmth and closeness that came out of reading sessions with their parents.
>
> Board President Mary Smith said, "We believe reading is basic to success in school and in life. We believe that children who come from homes where reading and good conversation are stressed start school with an advantage."
>
> The District is encouraging parents of preschool children to get involved along with parents who have children in school.

III. RADIO ANNOUNCEMENTS

Public service radio announcements are an excellent way of getting your message out. A large district or a State Department of Education may wish to use public service or commercial television for commercials. Well-known personalities will generally donate their time for this type of message.

Sample Radio Commercials

> Build some memories with your children. You may remember how nice it was when your parents read to you, and the warmth and closeness that came out of reading sessions with your parents. You can help us and help bind your family together by reading to or with your children 15 minutes each day.
>
> This message was brought to you by the Happy Valley School District, P.T.A. and the local International Reading Association (I.R.A) Chapter.

or

> Read to your children 15 minutes a day, five days a week. We want to emphasize the influence parents can have in establishing good reading habits in their children. You, the parents, are the school's partners and we need you.
>
> Research shows that parents have a greater influence on the child's life than anyone else. Parents are the first teachers of children.
>
> This message was a public service, brought to you by the Happy Valley P.T.A. and the Happy Valley Public School District.

IV. LETTER TO NEW PARENTS IN THE DISTRICT WITH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

The superintendent can welcome the parents in the district with a simple letter along with the Parents Booklet as a gift. The district may even use a "Welcome Wagon" approach. Parent-Teacher groups could be involved in welcoming new parents into the school district. An example of a welcoming letter follows:

> Dear Parent:
>
> Welcome to Happy Valley School District. Those of us here learned that your role as a teacher begins much earlier than ours--and we also know that the way we do our jobs depends on how well you did yours.

You do not have to wait until your child enters school to participate in an exciting activity which all of us are promoting. It's called "Parents in Reading."

The enclosed booklet will tell you more about our program. We also welcome you to visit us and get acquainted with our schools. We want you and your children to have a good experience in this school district.

Sincerely,

John Doe
Superintendent
Happy Valley School District

V. LETTER TO PARENTS OF NEW-BORN CHILDREN

When a new child is presented to parents, they get instructions on everything from care and feeding to how to prevent diaper rash. Why not a letter from the schools where they may spend twelve or more years of their life? It's a nice touch. A sample letter follows:

Dear Parent:

Congratulations on your daughter/son. Those of us in the Happy Valley School District have learned that your job as a teacher begins much earlier than ours. You, the parents, are the first teachers.

We want you to get off to a good start because we know that if you do your job well it will help us. You do not have to wait until your child is in school to participate in an exciting activity which all of us are promoting. It's called "Parents in Reading."

Enclosed is the Parents' Booklet, and a book list which you can use to build some memories with your children. You can find these and other good reading materials at your public library or at your local school library.

Again, congratulations and thanks for helping us stay in business.

Sincerely,

John Doe
Superintendent
Happy Valley School District

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR INVOLVING PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The "Parents in Reading" program needs the support of public library people to work successfully. The schools can provide book lists for parents, but this must be coordinated with the public libraries or there would be mass confusion. The following suggestions may assist you in involving public library personnel:

The superintendent should visit personally with public library representatives. This underscores the district's commitment to the program.

Ask about a special "Build Some Memories With Your Children" display. Offer to help build such a display.

The library displays suggested books suitable for children at various age levels. They may also have family albums available at cost so the reading memories can be recorded. An example of an entry into the album might be the books we have read and things we talked about over Thanksgiving holiday.

If you develop your own suggested book list for parents, ask the librarian to participate in developing your book list. However, a sample book list is included in the parents booklet.

If an employee in the public library system is helpful, a thank-you letter with a copy to his or her supervisor is always nice.

VII. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

The teacher must first be interested in involving parents. Without teacher commitment the program will not work.

It is the elementary teacher who must communicate with parents. The message is simple. No complex educational jargon, just a simple request--Help us, help your child, help yourself by taking just 15 minutes a day to read together as a family.

During the nine weeks "Building Memories" contest, the teacher does the following:

Talks with the class about the contest and asks them to tell their parents (parent or guardian) about the program. Through central office communications and press releases many parents will have heard about the program.

Asks students to encourage their parents to participate, but not put undue pressure on them. Some other adult close to the child, such as a grandparent, may substitute for the parent.

Gives each child a slip at the end of the week which must be signed by the parents, to certify the number of days they read to or with their children.

Most teachers will enjoy this assignment. They hear a lot about teacher accountability. This is an example of parent accountability--where the parents are asked to sign on the dotted line.

Those parents who read five days each week for nine weeks get first prize. A copy of the certificates used are attached. Lesser prizes, second and third place, may be given to those parents who had a near perfect record.

Reproducible Materials for Parents

Permission is granted to reproduce the following material in any quantity for distribution in your school district.

NORTHWEST REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

Building Reading Memories Contest

WEEK 1 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____	WEEK 2 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____
WEEK 3 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____	WEEK 4 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____
WEEK 5 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____	WEEK 6 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____
WEEK 7 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____	WEEK 8 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____
WEEK 9 This is to certify that I read to or with _____ (name) for 15 minutes on each of _____ days. Signed:_____	

Building Reading Memories

PARENTS' AWARD

_____

having shown devotion and concern for

_____

by reading together as a family,
is hereby given this special commendation.

_____	_____	_____
Year	Grade	School
_____	_____	_____
Teacher	Principal	Superintendent

Fundando Memorias Para La Lectura

PREMIO
PARA LOS PADRES

_____

por haber mostrado devoción e interés por

_____

leyendo juntos como una familia,
reciben por eso esta alabanza especial.

_____	_____	_____
Año	Nivel	Escuela
_____	_____	_____
Maestro	Director de la Escuela	Superintendente del Estado en Educación

Monthly Reminder for Parents

Enclosed are sample monthly reminders to parents which include book and activity suggestions. These reminders could come from the superintendent, principal, or a district reading coordinator.

Parents may be asked to send in suggestions for a monthly reminder, and the P.T.A. could be used as a catalyst. The following are only examples of monthly activities, because activities are much more meaningful if the ideas are generated by parents and teachers in the participating school districts.

October

PARENTS--OUR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHERS

This is the first in a series that will be distributed every month from October through February. Each month a list of books suitable for family reading will be included along with a suggested family activity and special events.

Ask for these at your library:

Edna Barth	Witches, Pumpkins and Grinning Ghosts
Eleanor Estes	Witch Family
Maria Leach	The Thing at the Foot of the Bed and Other Scary Tales
Ann McGovern	Squeals and Squiggles and Ghostly Giggles
Lillian Moore	See My Lovely Poison Ivy

ACTIVITY:

Carve a pumpkin. For Halloween carve a pumpkin to look like a smiling face. This is something the whole family can help with.

A HALLOWEEN LIMERICK

Upon a Halloween Night
Young children dressed up with delight
They tricked or treated and were generally greeted
But took care before taking one bite!

Perry Colton

HALLOWEEN NIGHT

Goblins and ghosts
Fly in the night
Goblins and ghosts
Faces all white

Witches and warlocks
Shapes in the moonlight
Witches and warlocks
Faces of dark fright

All with the same cry
Heard in the street
That ages-old slogan
HALLOWEEN--TRICK OR TREAT!!

Cathy Winters

PARENTS--OUR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHERS

Ask for these at your library:

Louisa May Alcott	An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving
Maria Lydia Child	Over the River and Through the Wood
Wende Devlin	Cranberry Thanksgiving
Jean Fritz	Who's Stepping on Plymouth Rock?
Gail Rock	Thanksgiving Treasure

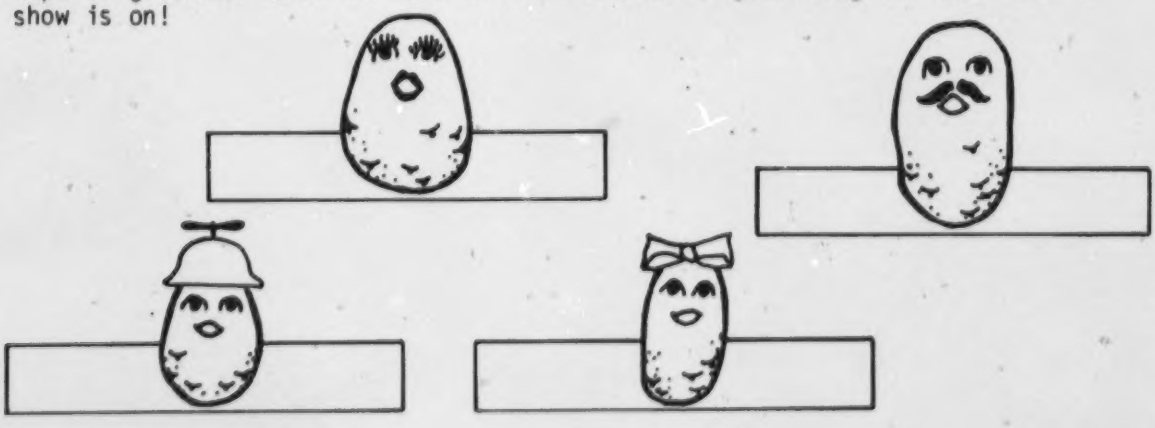
ACTIVITY:

Begin Your Family Scrapbook. Last year's 3-ring binder can be rejuvenated with contact paper cover. Use unlined 3-hole paper as a base to glue or tape pictures or mementoes on. Add a title: "Here We Are." Include a picture of each member of your family. You might also want to use a picture of the family pets and maybe a picture of your house.

Some time sit down together and write your favorite fall or Thanksgiving memories. (In the spring, families will be asked to bring their albums to their local library to display them.)

PUPPETS:

Here is the Great Potato family. Just color them and cut them out. Then tape or glue the backs of them to fit the size of your finger. Then the show is on!



PARENTS--OUR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHERS

Ask for these at your library:

Hans Christian Andersen	The Fir Tree
Raymond MacDonald	Why The Chimes Rang - And Other Stories
Louise Moeri	Star Mother's Youngest Child
Jean Van Leeuwen	The Great Christmas Kidnapping Caper
Margery Williams	The Velveteen Rabbit

ACTIVITY: Let's Make Edible Playdough

Place in a large bowl:	Mix together until it becomes a good consistency for play-dough. Then - Have Fun! (Keep in refrigerator tightly sealed.)
1 cup peanut butter	
1 cup corn syrup	
1-1/4 cup powdered sugar	
1-1/4 cup powdered milk	

A LIFE TIME TREASURE

The perfect gift: a book.

THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT ($2.95)
By Beatrix Potter. Original edition. Peter's tale has been a storybook classic since 1901. Also: The Tale of Benjamin Bunny, The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin. Warne

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS ($.95)
By Clement Moore. Ill. by Tasha Tudor. There are many editions of this classic holiday poem, but Tasha Tudor's warm and enchanting illustrations make this a volume everyone will want to read and keep. Rand

SYLVESTER AND THE MAGIC PEBBLE ($6.95)
By William Steig. Ill. by author. As a defense, Sylvester, a young donkey, uses his magic pebble to turn into a rock. Will he ever get back to his parents? Caldecott Medal 1970. Windmill Books/S&S

CRICKET'S CHOICE ($5.95)
Ed. by Clifton Fadiman & Marianne Carus. Ill. An anthology of stories, songs, poems and cartoons, many selected from Cricket magazine. An added feature is thumbnail sketches of some of the authors included. Open Court

ERIC CARLE'S STORYBOOK ($5.95)
Ill. by author. Lavishly illustrated collection which captures the wisdom, fantasy, and humor of seven tales from the Brothers Grimm. For the beginning reader as well as storytelling. Watts

Photos of your family Christmas will make a good addition to your Family Scrapbook.

PARENTS--OUR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHERS

New Books For a New Year

Ask for these at your library:

Jean Fritz	What's the Big Idea Ben Franklin? (Happy Birthday Ben - Jan. 17)
Richard Kennedy	Oliver Hyde's Dishcloth Concert
Elaine Konigsburg	From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
Ann McGovern	Half a Kingdom
Diane Wolkstein	Lazy Stories

ACTIVITY: Make Snow Ice Cream

1 egg
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup milk
snow

Beat the egg. Stir in the sugar. Measure and add the vanilla and milk. Stir until ingredients are well mixed. Get a big bowl of snow. Add snow to mixture until you can't add any more. For different flavors, use juices instead of milk. You might use grape, orange, pineapple or apricot juice.

For your family scrapbook - take pictures of your family doing all sorts of winter activities. Things such as sledding, ice skating, skiing, or any other things you do in the winter with your family.

PARENTS--OUR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHERS

Ask For These At Your Library:

Jean Fritz	George Washington's Breakfast
Carolyn Haywood	A Valentine Fantasy
Lee Hopkins	Good Morning To You, Valentine
C.S. Lewis	The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe
Ann Schweninger	The Hunt For Rabbit's Galosh

ACTIVITY: The 14th of February is Valentines Day, so let's make an OLD-FASHIONED VALENTINE.

You'll Need: Construction Paper (any color you'd like)
Foil (silver, gold, red)
Scraps of wrapping paper
Scraps of fabric (especially small prints, ginghams and checks)
Trim (doilies, braid, rickrack)

Now You:

1. Cut different sizes of hearts from the foil, fabric and wrapping paper.
2. Arrange and glue all the hearts on a sheet of construction paper. (The construction paper can be either cut in the shape of a heart or left as a square.) Then for a really old-fashioned look, add lace, doilies, rickrack, braid or other trim.
3. Now--write your own message and send your very special valentine to a very special person.

Winners of the 1978 Newbery and Caldecott awards are:

Caldecott: Noah's Ark by Peter Spier.

Newbery: Bridge To Terabithia by Katherine Paterson.